Promoting Healthy 21st Century Couple Relationships: Implications for Children

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NH&MRC, Australian Research Council, Queensland Cancer Fund, Relationships Australia, US Centre for Disease Control
Overview

- Changing nature of couple relationships
  - Marriage, cohabitation, separation, coparenting
  - Implications for couple interventions
- Couple relationship influences
- Couple Relationship Education in 21C
  - Overall efficacy
  - Flexible delivery
  - Specific efficacy
Couple Relationships & Children

- Married parents ≈ positive child outcome (Waite & Gallagher, 2000)
- Parental relationship adjustment ≈ positive child outcome (Erel & Burman, 1995)
- Parental conflict ≈ poor child adjustment (intact & separated parents)
  - Frequent
  - Intense (Violence)
  - Content about child, sibs
  - Unresolved
Divorce rate in OECD countries

OECD (2012)
Rise of Cohabitation

% of couple households

US | Canada | Australia

2010 | 2010 | 2010
Figure 1.6. A sharp increase in the proportion of births outside marriage, 1980 and 2007

Note: Data missing for Chile, Estonia, Israel, Mexico, Turkey and Slovenia.
1. 2006 for Iceland, Korea, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States; 2005 for Australia and Canada; 1999 for Mexico.
Source: Eurostat (2010), Eurostat New Cronos Database, and national statistical offices.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932392552
Relationship dissatisfaction by 5 year couple outcome

Wilkens et al. (2011) from HILDA 2003-2008 data
Changing Trajectories of Couple Relations

Classic 20th C
- Introduced in social networks
- Engaged
- Marry
- Cohabit
- Parent

Premarriage education

Common 21st C
- Meet online, social networks
- Date, Cohabit Marry?
- Parent Marry?
- Separate
- Repartner
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Relationship Satisfaction Trajectories

Bruce, Halford & Jones (2014); n = 377 newlywed couples
Ecological model of couple outcomes

Halford (2011)
Relationship Satisfaction in New Parents

Data from Petch, Halford, Creedy, & Gamble (2012): High risk = ≥3 of parental divorce, low education, low income, psych. distress, unplanned pregnancy, IPV.
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Meta-Analysis of Couple Relationship Education

Hawkins et al. (2008)
# Types of CRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRE</th>
<th>Risk profile</th>
<th>Pre CRE satisfaction</th>
<th>Immediate Δ satisfaction</th>
<th>Maintenance of satisfaction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mainly high, some low</td>
<td>Small to nil</td>
<td>Small effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mainly high, some low</td>
<td>Small to nil</td>
<td>Large effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicated</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>All low</td>
<td>Moderate to large increase</td>
<td>Large Effect</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Long term Effects of CRE

Halford & Bodenmann (2013)
Premarriage Education by Risk

(Halford, O’Donnell, Wilson, & Lizzio, 2006)
Couple Relationship Education

“The challenge is getting couples in the room”
“Bankers waiting for customer to come in the room”
MOBILE BANKING

Available Balance
$12,395.25

My Checking
Available Balance
$2,739.84

My Savings
Available Balance
$1,968.48

Money Market
Available Balance
$3,247.06

Platinum Card
Current Balance
$2,981.52

Processing
Transfer From ACCT #0342
$730.00
Millions of Online Relationship Sites

Google search maximum time 0.37 seconds
Flexible delivery = accessible
Immediate Change Couple Satisfaction After Flexible Delivery CRE

Halford, Pepping, Hilpert, Bodenmann, Busby, Larson, Holman, Bouma, & Wilson (2014)
Couple Satisfaction Change, Risk and Relationship Education (RE)

4 year change in newlyweds

3 year change in new parents

Halford, Sanders, & Behrens (2001)
Petch, Halford, Creedy & Gamble (2013)
Distress/Separation
Transitions
Formation
Commitment
Cohabitation
Parenthood
Health Crises
Work-Family
Repartnering
Retirement
Therapy
Co-parenting
Retirement
# Stepped Flexible Couple Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Indicated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Couple therapy</td>
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<td>Couple Care, CCP, CCR</td>
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<td>Assessment &amp; feedback, Brief tips</td>
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<td>Book, mass media</td>
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**Intervention Intensity**